

Report to Congress Assails Saigon on Land Reform

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An expert study made for a Congressional watchdog committee has concluded that the absence of effective land reform in South Vietnam "is costing the lives of large numbers of American soldiers and is significantly prolonging the war."

The author of the study, Dr. Roy L. Prosterman, is a professor of law at the University of Washington and a consultant on land law to the Stanford Research Institute. He conducted an extended investigation of land conditions on the scene as a member of a six-man team.

Parts of Dr. Prosterman's report were included in a statement of views filed with the House today by the chairman and by the ranking Republican member of the Government Operations subcommittee on foreign operations and freedom of information.

Two Dissents Rebutted

Representative John E. Moss of California, the chairman, and Representative Ogden R. Reid, Republican of Westchester, cited Dr. Prosterman's findings in rebutting the dissenting views of two Democratic Representatives — John S. Monagan of Connecticut and L. H. Fountain of North Carolina.

The dissenters argued that

the subcommittee report, as approved by the parent committee, failed to "place its findings and recommendations in the proper context of a South Vietnam shattered and buffeted by war."

Representatives Moss and Reid said that "on the contrary, the report is most explicit when it quotes a high adviser to the U.S. mission on land reform who testified that the farmers' interest in land reform is latent and enduring and that he wants to own the land he farms."

"The security of the countryside in Vietnam is directly dependent on whether the peasant has a stake in that security," they said. "If he does not, these areas will never be secure."

The rebuttal added: "It is the view of Dr. Roy L. Prosterman, a prominent and well-known consultant to the U.S. mission, that the recent massive Vietcong attacks against Saigon, Danang, provincial capitals and American air bases 'vividly demonstrates the near bankruptcy of the Saigon regime's effort to win the loyalty of the masses.'"

'Apathetic to Hostile'

"Dr. Prosterman points out that the scope of manpower and logistics involved in mounting a complex of attacks of this kind 'make it wholly unlikely that they could have occurred without multiple specific advance intelligence warn-

ings except in a setting in which the wills of the population ranged from apathetic to hostile toward their Government'."

Several of the more dramatic passages from the Prosterman report were omitted from the joint rebuttal statement by representatives Moss and Reid. The passages included the following:

"The failure to undertake a sweeping and genuine land reform in South Vietnam assuredly is costing, during each year of delay, the lives of large numbers of American soldiers over and above the number that would otherwise be killed. It is significantly prolonging the war."

"Virtually all land reform ceased in 1961, and the major new development in the law has been one prescribing in effect 'negative land reform,' or the return of the landlords to their former positions in areas that have been resecured."

"The Americans are thus placed in a position of those who-are-here-to-take-back-our-land in the eyes of hundreds of thousands of peasants, and must unconsciously bear the enormous burden of their opposition as well as the burden of fighting the true hard-core Communist elements."

The statement by Representatives Moss and Reid took issue with a statement in the dissenting report quoting a study for the Defense Department made

by the Rand Corporation, a research-and-development organization.

The study said at one point that "from the point of view of Government control, the ideal province in South Vietnam would be one in which few peasants operate their own land, the distribution of landholdings is unequal and no land redistribution has taken place."

The Moss-Reid rebuttal said on this point, "we discovered that the author of this study had never been in Vietnam," and added: "We strongly believe it is morally wrong deliberately to keep the people of any nation weak and dependent in order to control them—whatever the end."

The report of the subcommittee was completed last October, but an endorsement by the parent group was delayed until last week. After endorsement by the full committee, the report was made public Monday.

The subcommittee staff had been on notice that there would be a dissenting opinion. The dissenters felt that the matter belonged more properly to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. When it developed that the dissent went to substantive issues, Chairman Moss and Representative Reid determined upon their rebuttal.

The full committee report was filed with the Speaker of the House today, and the rebuttal was appended to it.